

Town of Mansfield Parking Steering Committee for Storrs Center

**Special Meeting
Monday, June 16, 2014
Mansfield Downtown Partnership Office
23 Royce Circle**

6:00 PM

Minutes

Members Present: Karla Fox (Chair), Paul Aho, Dwight Atherton, Manny Haidous, Mike Taylor

Ex-Officio Members Present: Howard Kaufman (by phone) and Debbie Lastro with Storrs Center Alliance, Matt Hart, John Carrington, and Cynthia van Zelm

Guests: Alex Marcellino, Mike Nintean, Matt Joyce with Wilder Companies

1. Call to Order

Chair Karla Fox called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

2. Approval of Minutes from March 6, 2014

Paul Aho made a motion to approve the minutes from March 6, 2014. Dwight Atherton seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

3. Remarks from the Chair

Ms. Fox asked Committee members and guests present to introduce themselves. She noted that parking enforcement is complex and some of the issues that have come up are not unexpected.

4. Review and Discussion of Current Parking Enforcement and Next Steps

Cynthia van Zelm referred to a memo she had prepared and given to the Committee about some of the enforcement issues that have come up over the last few months. In particular, there are issues where people are parking in lots to avoid a parking fee, and the ticket appeals process has become onerous.

Ms. Fox asked if the Price Chopper lot is enforced by Storrs Center Alliance. Debbie Lastro said the lot is owned by Storrs Center Alliance. Ms. van Zelm said Storrs Center Alliance has asked for a proposal from Central Parking on how much it would cost to enforce the lot.

Matt Hart said Town staff is noting more people parking at the Community Center, Town Hall, and High School lots that may be patronizing Storrs Center. This has caused a problem because parking is limited for employees and visitors to these buildings during normal business hours.

The other issue that is coming out in the appeals process is that people will park in a 2 hour slot in the Dog Lane lot and then move their car to another slot for 2 more hours. The current enforcement process does not effectively track this violation, and is difficult for the hearings officers hearing the ticket appeals to address.

Mike Nintean, the Town's Building Official, said the largest abuse being seen by the hearings officers is violation of the 2 hour time limit in the Dog Lane lot. He said the signage is not clear that parking is free for 2 hours a day or for 2 hours per space.

Mr. Nintean said he and Sgt. Rich Cournoyer had discussed whether it would be possible to charge for parking in the lots. He said signage that would indicate parking is for 2 hours once in a 24 hour period and License Plate Reader technology would help. Mr. Nintean noted that the collection rate on tickets is only about 50 percent.

Paul Aho asked how hard it would be to gate the lots. Mr. Hart said there may be new technology such as the License Plate Reader technology that would be used.

Dwight Atherton said the most low tech option now is "Pay by Phone." An LPR function is needed to enforce this option. It allows for a few hours free in a lot and tracks when a car has arrived in a space. There is a learning curve and customer service ambassadors are needed. Mr. Atherton said the trend is get away from gates and into this type of technology. Mr. Atherton plans to do a pilot of "Pay by Phone" at UConn. A few vendors offer "Pay by Phone."

Ms. Fox asked if Mr. Nintean would provide some data on ticket collection including the reasons why tickets are being issued.

Howard Kaufman provided some background of Storrs Center Alliance's perspective when parking was originally discussed with the Parking Steering Committee. He said he has been an advocate for making parking as user friendly as possible for the customer and that was the basis for his pushing for two hours of free parking in the lots, streets, and parking garage. He felt this was important in a community where people do not typically pay for parking, and continues to feel it is important to offer the "free" parking option. Mr. Kaufman, however, said he is sensitive to the enforcement issues and asked if improved signage with respect to the 2 hour time limit would be helpful.

Mr. Atherton asked whether free parking is needed in the Dog Lane lot if it is available in the parking garage.

Manny Haidous asked Mr. Nintean if the ticketing is seasonal and Mr. Nintean replied that there are more tickets issued when UConn and the High School is in session. Mr. Haidous asked if the enforcement was the same. Ms. Lastro said the enforcement is generally the same with some reductions on the weekend. She noted that the enforcement is paid for from the revenues from the garage.

Mr. Haidous advocated for signage in his lot to discourage non-customers, especially at the grocery store, to not park in his lot.

Mr. Haidous and Mr. Taylor said there has been a problem with contractors parking in their lots but they are receptive to being told to move.

Mr. Taylor said it is crucial to create an inviting shopping environment for the downtown, not only in Storrs Center. The largest problem he sees is people parking in lots and walking off of the property. He does not have an issue with people parking in his lot for longer periods of time IF they are patronizing the businesses there. Mr. Hart asked Mr. Taylor how he enforces this on his lot. Mr. Taylor said he has his own employees enforce and will tow cars if his employees see someone walk off the property. He does not do a lot of ticketing.

Mr. Taylor said he foresees issues with the Price Chopper lot and with the 5,000 square foot building once a tenant(s) are in place in that building. The lot is already crowded. It may make sense for employees to park offsite.

Mr. Aho said he thinks some visitors do not realize that the parking garage is free for the first two hours.

Mr. Kaufman thought a Pay and Display and Pay by Space enforcement method in the Dog Lane lot might put the Taylor and Haidous properties in jeopardy for additional parkers as people may park there where it is "free."

Mr. Kaufman said parking counts were done this spring and winter which indicated that the number of spaces being used were as predicted.

Mr. Hart said it may make sense to separate the issues into two categories: 1) Storrs Center Alliance lots and 2) public lots. He asked Mr. Kaufman to give some consideration to the same method of paying for parking in the Dog Lane lot as the garage.

Mr. Hart would like to come back to the next Parking Steering Committee meeting with a recommendation on parking enforcement.

Ms. Fox asked that the key issues be identified and information on tickets be summarized for the Committee after the parking team staff meeting in early July. She asked Ms. van Zelm to send an e-mail to the Committee to this effect.

Ms. Fox said she believes more people use the Dog Lane lot because of its perceived convenience to the current businesses. Visitors want to walk directly to the businesses. Perhaps there could be improved signage to let people know there is an exit/entrance to the parking garage closer to Dog Lane.

John Carrington suggested that businesses include information about the first two hours of parking being free in the parking garage.

Mr. Atherton asked if the number of appeals have decreased as a percentage over time. Mr. Nintean said he could track some information on violations and will do so.

Mr. Taylor asked what is done after a number of violations. Mr. Nintean said Central Parking can have a car towed after three unpaid tickets. The IParq system is set up so that if there are more than five violations, the DMV is notified and a person is prevented from re-registering their car if the tickets are not paid. In addition, even if a person has paid their three tickets, if they receive a fourth ticket, they will get towed.

5. Update on Operations

Ms. Lastro said the parking garage is generating revenue and profit was made in the first year. The second year will be reconciled on June 30th. She said approximately 100 Storrs Center employees are paying for monthly passes. She said there are 26 monthly parkers that have not cycled out yet. Storrs Center Alliance stopped issuing monthly passes to non-employees once the Health Center opened as they needed several employee spaces.

Ms. Lastro said there is on-going discussion about where the contractors for Phase 2 (Wilbur Cross Way) will park. They may be staging in the area where the new lot will be built.

6. Committee Meeting Dates (September 4, December 4)

Ms. Fox asked Ms. van Zelm to add New Business to future agendas.

Mr. Taylor cannot make the December 4 meeting date. Ms. Fox asked Ms. van Zelm to poll the Committee on a meeting date in early November.

7. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm.

Minutes taken by Cynthia van Zelm.